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THE TRAGEDY OF WYOMING.

A PAPER READ BEFORE

THE BUFFALO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

APRIL 1, 1889,

BY

WM. CLEMENT BRYANT.





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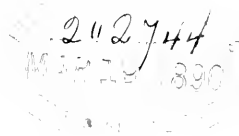
BY

WM. CLEMENT BRYANT.

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Captain Brant and The Old King.

THE TRAGEDY OF WYOMING.

The fall of Quebec in 1759 ended the long and bloody contest between France and Great Britain for the mastery of a continent. A moment's reflection will suffice to remind us of the momentous issues involved in this struggle between the two competing civilizations. An indigenous and barbaric people, known as the Iroquois, or Five Nations, the bulk of whom dwelt in what is now known as Central and Western New York, was an important if not controlling factor in this eventful consummation. In the war afterwards waged by the American colonies for independence, though sadly diminished, they were sufficiently numerous to form an appreciable element of the forces which Britain hurled against her rebellious offspring. Wasted by wars, and overwhelmed by the tidal wave of European emigration they have, within less than a century, peacefully surrendered an empire to the intruding race, and have disappeared from history as they soon will from the gaze of men.

The recorded opinions regarding this historic race are mostly idealistic and irreconcilable. "Romans of the West" is the eulogistic title bestowed by their earliest observers on this warlike people before they had become enervated and corrupted by contact with European civilization; the "Indians of Indians" they are termed in the glowing pages of Parkman; kindly conservators of peace and the domestic affections, is their surprising characterization by Horatio Hale; a "gifted and progressive race" they were declared to be by Morgan. On the other hand, they are portrayed by writers, possessing equal opportunities of observation, as monsters of cruelty, devoid of all the nobler attributes of humanity.

Models for a sculptured Apollo, the perfection of the human form, accompanied by a princely mien, and an unstudied grace of movement may have frequently been seen among the lithe and supple braves grouped around gallant King Hendrick, and the sight of whom kindled the imagination of Sir Joshua Reynolds; but the nature of these picturesque youth rarely revealed that union of gentleness, love and valor which are the essential ingredients of chivalry. Heroes they were according to their own rude standard suggested by the untamed animals which formed the emblazonry of their shields; exceptions, however, were not wanting, as in the case of *Hiawatha, of a lofty magnanimity and an all-embracing benevolence.

Cruel, ruthless and vengeful as we must admit they were, when war inflamed their passions, we cannot deny the Iroquois warriors possession of such attributes as loyalty, chastity, valor, gratitude, hospitality, acumen, an inspiring eloquence and an indomitable spirit of independence. They jealously emphasized the distinction between allies and vassals in their relations to the Dyo-hence-caw,† or People-of-the-Morning, throughout the period of a long and faithful service in which their blood was shed like water.

There have arisen among this people, within the historic period, many remarkable characters; perhaps none more so than the personage I am about to introduce to your notice.

Early in the 18th century, and before the hearts of the American colonists were thrilled by the first monitory rumble of that great upheaval, which we denominate the American revolution, there lay in the fruitful and romantic region bordering the foot of Lake Seneca, and within sight of its sparkling, unsullied waters, the most considerable village of the Senecas. This village was known to the whites as Old

* Hiawatha was the founder of the League of the Iroquois—a veritable “law-giver of the stone age,” and not a mythological creation; although ^{the revolution} ~~separation~~ has invested him with supernatural attributes. By birth he was an Onondaga, and by adoption a Mohawk. In the Mohawk dialect the name is pronounced A-yohn-wah-ta-ha; in the Onondaga, Hay-en-wat ha, and in the Seneca, Hay-ya-wan-tah.

† The Seneca name for the English.

Castle or Kanadesaga. It was surrounded by a timbered palisade and earthen works, constructed under the supervision of that astute and vigilant servant of the crown, Sir William Johnson. Outlying this forest fastness were thriving orchards of apples and peach, and broad fields of golden maize. Kanadesaga was peopled, principally, by a clan of Senecas whose totem was the turtle, a symbol, in the simple heraldry of the Iroquois, of ancient and illustrious origin. The principal and hereditary chieftain who swayed this rude community, and whose influence was, in truth, potential in the councils of the great confederacy, was known to his people as *Gui-en-gwa-toh*, and in the dialect of the people who lived nearer the sea, *Sayenqueraghta*, or *Sakayengwaraton*, which signified the "Disappearing Smoke or Mist."* It was this chieftain's prerogative to kindle and to extinguish the council fire of his nation, and this idea was imbedded in the rocky syllables of his Indian name. Among the English he was called indifferently, *Old King*, *King of Kanadesaga*, the *King of the Senecas* and *Old Smoke*; again allusion being made to his official prerogative. The early pioneers and explorers knew little and cared less about the unwritten constitutions of their barbaric neighbors. When, in the course of their dealings with the natives, they met a sachem, who was the spokesman and apparently the venerated head and leader of his people, they bestowed upon him a royal title, as in the instances of *King Powhattan*, *King Philip*, *King Hendrick* and others. In the same spirit of extravagant idealization when they observed an Indian town fortified by encircling palisades and defensive moats, they dignified it with the title of castle, as for example *Oneida Castle*, *Onondaga Castle*, upper and lower *Mohawk Castles*, the *Seneca or Old Castle*, etc. The title of *King* was not applicable to any Iroquois ruler or official. The Iroquois recognized no Kingship save that which naturally inheres in the born leaders of men,—men whose superior understanding, imperious will and meritorious achievements inexorably commanded popular homage and obedience. The government of the confederate Iroquois was strangely composite,—an oligarchy wedded to a pure democracy. The

*Literally, —The-Smoke-has-Disappeared.

Old King, like King Hendrick,—(who, it is worthy of remark, bore among the Mohawks the same title of Sayenqueraghta),—was endowed with the innate, imperial attributes to which I have alluded. The servants of the British crown in North America apparently encouraged this assumption of royalty on the part of the Old King. His family had for generations, and while the majority of his nation were inclined to yield to the blandishments of the rival French monarchy, remained firm in attachment to the British sovereign. In recognition of their loyal faith the good Queen Anne bestowed upon the Sayenqueraghta of her reign, an ancestor of Old King, a coronet, the only instance, it is believed, in the history of the aborigines of America. Kings have been crowned and dynasties established with less color of right than that possessed by King Sayenqueraghta. The incident gathers significance when we recall the royal jealousy evoked by the marriage of Rolf, an English subject, with the Princess Pocahontas in the days of King James the First.

The red men had no biographers or annalists, and the materials for a biography of the Old King are extremely scanty. The white man's records, however, afford us occasional glimpses of the plumed warrior in his varied career,—now the impassioned orator haranguing a dignified group of blanketed sachems; now with grim visage dealing death blows in the thick of battle; now in friendly conference with men of rank in military and civil life; anon, stooping to succor distressed captives like the Gilbert family, or welcoming as a son to his cabin the weary and famished missionary, Kirkland, and then vanishing mysteriously from view as if to justify his quaint appellation, The-disappearing-mist.

Bancroft, speaking of the Senecas at Wyoming, says: "Their King, Sayenqueraghta, was both in war and in council the foremost man in all the "six nations."*

Col. Stone remarks, "Old Smoke was the most powerful, as he was deemed the wisest sachem of his time. He was the principal sachem, or civil chief of the nation, and his word was law. When he thought proper to convene a council it was

* Bancroft's History U. S. Vol. V, p. 279.

only for the purpose of announcing his intentions, and none said nay to his behests. His infallibility was never questioned.”*

At an interview held by the Hon. O. H. Marshall with the venerable chief Seneca White at his house on the Cattaraugus Reservation, in 1864, he informed Mr. Marshall that Old Smoke was the most influential man among the Senecas in the Revolutionary war, and that *he opposed the Indians taking any part in the war*. According to the Senecas he was a large, portly man of commanding presence. That he was a man of great prominence at Kanadesaga as early as 1765, is evidenced from his position in the councils then held. His closing speech in the council at that time, in defence of Rev. Samuel Kirkland, whose life was in imminent danger in consequence of the death of his host, was full of convincing argument and was a master-piece of eloquence that bore down all opposition and elicited a general shout of applause “which made the council house ring.” †

But it is in connection with the tragedy of Wyoming that I wish to call your attention to the Old King to-night; and here let me refresh your memories by giving a condensed and brief recital of the salient incidents of the affair as they have been accepted by the historian.

The valley of the Wyoming, in the early summer of 1778, presented a scene of peaceful and sylvan beauty. Slope and lowland, on either side of the Susquehanna, were dotted with clearings and nestling cabins, the abode of contented toil, frugality and virtue. No notes of strife or discord arose from the bosom of the happy valley. Only the plaint of some wild bird; the plowboy's careless whistle; the merry laugh and shouts of children at play; the ring of the woodman's axe; the muffled beating of some thresher's flail, and the rhythmic plash and murmur of the winding river, broke the Sabbath hush of the embowered settlement.

* Life and Times of Red Jacket by William L. Stone.

† Lothrop's Life of Kirkland, Chap. 3, Spark's Am. Biography, Vol. XXV.

Wyoming would have been the seat of unalloyed happiness but for two causes. The youth and chivalry of the pioneers had, in response to the trumpet-call of duty, left their homes and families to the care of aged sires and stripplings, and were fighting the battles of freedom on far away fields; and, besides, there was ever an undefinable, shivering fear lest at any moment, out of the dark, mysterious forest, which begirt the settlement, there might emerge a murderous horde of their implacable enemies, tory and savage.

This apprehension was too soon justified when, on the second day of July intelligence came that a body of Tory Rangers, a detachment of Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens and a large body of Indians, all under the command of the redoubtable Col. John Butler, had taken possession of Fort Wintermoot, a tory stronghold situated a few miles distant. No sooner was the presence of the enemy discovered than the scattered male inhabitants, who remained at their homes, hurriedly assembled to the number of four hundred, at a palisaded work known as Old Fort Forty. Col. Zebulon Butler, a soldier of some experience in the French and Indian war, assumed command of the little band of patriots. A council of war was held early on the 3d of July and the desperate alternative of anticipating the enemy's attack by surprise was adopted. The plan might have succeeded but for an untoward accident which apprised the enemy of his danger. As it happened the Americans found their foe in line of battle for their reception. Col. Z. Butler commanded the right of the Americans, the left was commanded by Col. Dennison, assisted by Col. Dorrance. Opposed to the right of the Americans and also resting on the bank of the river was Col. John Butler with his rangers; the right of the enemy, resting upon or rather extending into a marsh, was composed of Indians and tories led by Sayenqueraghta. The field of battle was a partially cleared plain.

The action began soon after four o'clock in the afternoon, and was for a time kept up on both sides with great spirit. The right of the Americans advanced bravely as they fired, and the best troops of the enemy were compelled to fall back. At this juncture Sayenqueraghta with a swarm of screeching warriors unperceived outflanked Col. Dennison and suddenly

like a dark cloud fell upon his rear. So sorely harassed Col. D. ordered his command to fall back which was mistaken by the men for an order to retreat. * This misconception was fatal. A panic ensued and the Americans fled towards Fort Forty pursued by the Indians, who with their tomahawks and spears wrought terrific slaughter and committed deeds of wanton and revolting cruelty. The few survivors who escaped the carnage and succeeded in reaching the fort were soon besieged by throngs of excited Indians and tories. Possessing no adequate means of defence, and having no expectation or hope of succor the patriots yielded to the entreaties of the women and children and capitulated, the terms of surrender being that the besieged should no longer fight against the crown and should yield possession of all provincial stores to the conquerors, who in turn promised them immunity from the scalping knife and tomahawk, and undisturbed possession of their homes and clearings. The Indians, however, could not be restrained. No lives were taken after the surrender, but the destruction of houses and property was pursued with merciless persistency until the vale became a scene of hideous, smouldering desolation. Many of the terror-stricken inhabitants sought safety in flight, and many of them fell by the way, perishing from sickness and hunger.†

Thus far I have attempted to give a summary of this tragic event, as the sober muse of history has recorded it, and which is popularly known as the Massacre of Wyoming. The enchanting theatre of this exciting drama,—the picturesque actors, patriot, tory, royal green and painted savage, and the terrible scenes of suffering, upon which the curtain falls,

† "More than two-thirds of their number [the patriotic forces] were massacred by the Indians and Tories with every circumstance of savage cruelty, not even the prisoners being spared. Some of the latter were put to death on the evening of the battle, Queen Esther, a half-breed Indian woman, to avenge the death of her son, tomahawked fourteen with her own hands near a rock which still bears her name."—Appleton's *Am. Cyclopaedia*. *Title, Wyoming*. Col. Butler's official report agrees with Col. Claus' statement that only two white men in his command were killed and that the casualties included about a dozen Indians wounded. The reader cannot help contrasting this result with that of Oriskany where the desperate valor of the colonists shone conspicuously.

invoked the scarcely less voracious muse of poesy and inspired Campbell's justly admired epic, "Gertrude of Wyoming."

Who led the Indians at Wyoming? is a minor *vexata questio* of history. The earlier writers assigned the doubtful honor to Joseph Brant—Thayendanegea. On their authority the poet Campbell makes the "Monster Brant" the author of the woes and horrors which befell the simple-minded dwellers in the valley. Col. Stone, the biographer of the great Mohawk, zealously endeavored to exculpate ~~the~~^{this} hero by showing that Brant was not even present when the tragedy occurred, and that the responsibility rested on the shoulders of the Old King.

Apparently the matter was set at rest when in reply to an eminent skeptic in the Democratic Review, Caleb Cushing, Stone was at the pains of gathering and publishing fresh and convincing testimony. Some doubting Thomas, however, in the historical field, periodically asserts that Brant *was* the master spirit among the fell agencies of mischief at Wyoming. Unfortunately for Brant his reputation for humanity could better sustain the burden of Wyoming, which he disclaimed, than the infamy of Cherry Valley which neither he nor his biographer sought to evade.

If Brant was not the leader, was Col. Stone correct in assigning that post to the King of the Senecas? This question was discussed more than twenty years ago in the club meetings of this society. Ketchum in his "History of Buffalo and the Senecas" asserted with confidence that the leader could not have been the Old King. In this opinion that accomplished and conscientious investigator, Orsamus H. Marshall, was inclined to concur. Both were deceived, as was the writer, by certain confusing statements in contemporary narratives, or documents, which assigned to Old King a weight of years and infirmities that would naturally disqualify him for the leadership in so arduous a campaign. The paper which I shall proceed to read is apparently decisive of that question. How this document came to light, after slumbering in an ancient chest for nearly a century, the following letter from the late Senator Plumb will explain :

“ NIAGARA, Prov. Ontario, {
Nov. 5, 1886. }

“ DEAR MR. BRYANT :

“ Mr. Conover, whom I met at Brantford, has sent me some of his Indian pamphlets, among them a paper on the King of the Senecas,* whom he names Sayenqueraghta. * *

Mr. Conover gives the name of Captain Pollard, an Indian, who told Col. Stone and Mr. Orlando Allen that he was at Wyoming and that the King was the leader of the Indians on that occasion, which statement Mr. C., was inclined to question.

You are quoted by Mr. Conover as stating that ‘It is claimed that young King was then too young to be a leader of a war party. I fear it will never be known who that leader was.’

Now I think I can help you solve the doubt, and can show very conclusively, that the Old King was not only the leader, but the originator of the Wyoming Expedition, and also a most active and faithful coadjutor of Brant as an ally of the crown.

“A family fourth in descent from Sir William Johnson, the great-grandchildren of Col. Daniel Claus, Deputy Supt. of Indian affairs, who married a daughter of Sir William, by his wife Catherine Weisenberg, resides here.

Mr. William Kerby of this place, the accomplished author of the *Chien d’Or*, and of much other Canadian literature of the highest order, informed me that he had discovered in the possession of this family a valuable collection of revolutionary documents: minutes of Indian councils, autograph letters, and many interesting memoranda by Col. Daniel Claus. Among the papers were all those that were found in the tent of Gen. St. Clair after his defeat, apparently in the original hasty wrappage, and seeming never to have been opened or examined!

* “ SAYENQUERAGHTA, KING OF THE SENECAS” by Geo. S. Conover, Waterloo, N. Y., 1885. In this pamphlet the author, a very able and conscientious investigator, has collated all the printed accounts of and references to the Old King which he could discover.

There were voluminous writings of Col. Daniel Claus, and a most valuable essay by his brother-in-law, Col. Guy Johnson, on the Six Nation Indians, written at the request and for the use of Robertson, the Historian of America, but not inserted in his unfinished work. The papers, numbering nearly 2,000, were carefully examined and roughly catalogued by Mr. Kerby and myself, and at my instance were purchased by the Dominion Government and placed in the public archives. One of the MSS., in the handwriting of Col. Daniel Claus, is headed 'Anecdotes of Capt. Joseph Brant, Niagara, Sept. 1778.' The following extracts may serve to elucidate the doubt as to the leadership of the Wyoming Expedition. It could not have been written with any other idea, or object, than that of stating facts *then perfectly well known to hundreds of people who would be most likely to read the statements* of Col. Claus if published.

That they were *not* published was doubtless owing to the lack of opportunity, in part, and perhaps in a greater degree, to severe criticism, which they contained, upon the course of Col. Butler in failing to co-operate cordially or promptly with Brant. The first extract refers to the battle of Oriskany, at which Col. Claus was present, and took a prominent and active part. * * * * *

(Then follow certain extracts from the MS., which I am about to read.) Mr. Plumb concludes :

"It may be that you will think the extracts of sufficient value to communicate them to your society, and I shall be very glad to have you do so. I shall write to Mr. Conover that I have sent them to you.

With kind regards, believe me, yours very faithfully,
J. B. PLUMB."

The writer sent to Ottawa and procured a copy of Col. Claus' paper entitled "Anecdotes of Captain Joseph Brant," together with the other MSS. mentioned by Mr. Plumb. It is an authentic document written by a trusted servant of the crown, possessing every facility for testing the truth of what he has deliberately recorded, and his main statements of fact are credible, notwithstanding a certain *animus* of personal hostility which the author is at no pains to conceal.

"CANADIAN ARCHIVES.

M. G. 2.

p. 46.

From Niagara, a King's Fort on the Frontier of the Province of New York, we received the following :

Joseph Brant, alias Thayendanegea, now about 36 years old was born in the upper Mohawk Town of Canojoharee. Capt. Brant, when a young lad, showed an extraordinary capacity and promptness in acquiring the reading and writing of his own language, under an Indian school master appointed by the Honorable Society at his native place. The late Sir Wm. Johnson discovering that genius sent him to a good English school where he soon made such proficiency as to be able not only to read and write English surprisingly well but soon undertook to translate English into the Iroquois or Mohawk Language and so vice versa and that so well that the late Sir Wm. Johnson found him very serviceable in translating Indian Speeches of moment to be made to the 6 Nations in Council and translate them in writing into the Iroquois Language in order to convey to the Indians the full meaning and substance of such Speeches wch Indian interpreters who in general are a dull illiterate kind of white people never were capable of doing, he became therefore a great acquisition to the Superintendent of the Iroquois and 6 Nations and was employed by them accordingly and approved himself a very useful and true person to government discovering at the same time a penetrating sound and good natural understanding wch he manifested in translating great part of the N. Testament under the inspection of Mr. Stuart, the missionary who explained difficult passages to him, as well some sermons of diff't subjects. At the Commencement of the unhappy Disputes between Great Britain and her Colonies he made shrewd and strict Enquirys into Reason of the Complaints of the Americans among whom he chiefly resided and from whom he heard nothing but forging of chains and intended Tyranny ag'st them. At the same time seeing no Apparent Alteration or putting such Complaints of Tyranny into Execution the Refutation of it agitated his mind so far as to determine on a voyage to Great Britain in order to try what he

could find out there of the matter plainly foreseeing how much the Indians in general were concerned in such a Quarrel, well knowing how ignorant they were as to the Disputes in Question. Accordingly in the Autumn 1775 after faithfully serving that campaign and acquainting the Indians with the Reason of his Intended Journey he embarked at Quebec with the gentleman that was to be appointed at home in the room of Sr. Wm. Johnson. After his arrival he made himself acquainted with Gentlemen on both sides of the Question, soon finding out there was an op'pon in favour of the Americans in England; and his penetrating genius soon saw into the Motives of that Opposition and plainly discovering that there was no Reason of of such complaints he was told of in America and all they and the Americans aimed at was to be sole Masters of the Continent of America, an Event so destructive to the Liberty of the Indns and their Country, and being convinced of the Anxiety the Americans for some years showed to dispossess the Indns of their Country had not the Crown interfered. During his stay in London he was by order of Government shown all the remarkable Places and Curiosities about London and vicinity, with which he was very much pleased in particular the Tower. Several Gentlemen of Distinction and Fortune took notice of him and used him very kindly and although some of them were friends of the Americans and argued in their favour he listened to their Arguments with Calmness and answered with Discretion. In the beginning of June 1776 he embarked at Falmouth on board the Harriot packet in Company with the Superintendt—of the 6 Nations and sailed for N. York, where it was expected he would soon be able to get to Albany and from thence among his countrymen the 6 Nations. The packet on acct of the summer season standing to southward fell in with a rebel privateer of superior force near the Carolinas when soon a smart engagement ensued and ye rebels were confident of success. Joseph and his companion, John of the lower Mohawk Town who attended him, having brass rifle guns, made them a present from my Lord Townsend, were so dexterous and good marksmen as to pick off those on board the rebel ship whom by their dress they took to be officers and after an engagement of two glasses the privateer thought proper to

sheer off. The Harriot havg her rigging much damaged was disabled from chasing her and soon after got into N. York, being the latter end of July, and a little before Sr. Wm. Howe begun his operations upon the rebels on Long Island on wch occasion he had another opportunity of showing his bravery and activity wch Sr. Wm. acknowledged by having him always abt him, he was also particularly esteemed or taken notice of by the Earl of Percy for it. Finding that the campaign operations were not decisive enough to take Albany. And Brant determined penetrating the rebel country and woods to get among his Indn friends the 6 Nations, Sr. Wm. Howe and the Superintendant furnishing [him] with orders and Instructions to the officers of Gov't for that purpose and wch he with much fatigue and danger effected. The first Ind'ns he met with were the Colonies of the 6 Nations and their Dependants settled upon the Susquehanna River, whom he soon convinced with what he had heard and saw in England and the Arguments he made use of how much their own Country and Liberty was in danger from the Rebels, that they all unanimously agreed with him in sentiment and determined to act agtst the Rebels who then secretly had sent Emissaries from N. England among them to gain them over to their interest but they were soon obliged to disappear for fear of being seized upon by the Indians. These proceedings of Mr. Brant soon taking vent among the Rebels on the Mohawk River they began to collect a Body of men to oppose him and he saw himself under a necessity to call for more assistance among the 6 Nations and procure himself and party ammunition, wch was not nearer to be had than Niagara; on his way thither he had the 6 Nation country to pass thro' where in every Town he was well received, called meetings and acquainting them with his Adventures and what he heard and saw in the King of England's Residence, wch was received with much greediness and approbation. He was faithfully promised to be supported ag'st the Rebels whenever he should call upon them; he then proceeded to Niagara and on his arrival producing his Orders and Instructions from Sr. Wm. Howe and Col. Guy Johnson, the Supt. of the 6 Nations.—But here Jealousy and Envy the Monsters of all Discord and Mischief showed their Heads, and the person who was left there in

1775 by the Superintendant to assist the Command'g Officer at that post in Indn Matters was an Officer of equal Employ with Mr. Brant only of less Importance as to Indn Matters & acting in a more servile Line, this person having with flattery & cunning (being bred and born in N. England) insinuated himself into the favour of Sr. Guy Carleton & procuring himself thereon to the office upon the Strength of that lavished immense sums without doing the least service to Govt since the beginning of the Rebellion but allowed the Rebels to establish themselves at Fort Stanwix in the middle of the 6 Nation Country. This person then imagining to please Sir Guy in slighting & disregarding Sr. Wm. Howe & the Superinten't; besides apprehensive Mr. Brant should do anything that would expose his Inactivity & willing Backwardness received him very coolly and indifferently altho' under Superints immediate employ and appointment having nothing seperate from Sr. Guy even denied him the quantity of Ammunition he demanded for opposing the Rebels that were assembling again and he was obliged to purchase what he could get among Traders out of his own pocket & returned very much discouraged from Niagara; on his arrieval with his party he distributed what little Ammunition he got wch was very trifling and soon after had an Acct. that a Body of 800 Rebels were assembled to pay him a visit shortly. Upon wch he immediately sent Runners to call the 6 Nations to his assistance but [illegible] they were influenced from Niagara not to go. —Inds being so ignorant credulous a people that they may soon be dissuaded from keeping their promises with a plausible story [illegible] of raising their Jealousy. Accordingly not a man came to his assistance and soon after the Rebels marched upon him with 300 men leaving the rest as Corps de Reserve at Cherry Valley they however finding Mr. Brant's party prepared and in readiness to receive them, they sent a Messenger to Mr. Brant that they wanted to speak with them as friends, he returned them his answer if they would come unarmed he would admit them having at the time not 200 men together when they came to parley and the Rebels came & entreated them to stand Neuter in the Quarrel. That they would [illegible] their assistance & it would reasonably be supposed the King of Great Britain would not want it, wch Mr.

Brant flatly refusing telling them he had sufficient reasons to oppose their proceedings on his own acct. upon wch one of the Rebel Colonels hinted that he would be compelled when Mr. Brant gave a Sign to his party they immediately put themselves in a posture of Defense tho' with very little Ammunition, upon wch the Rebels drew in their horns & were for peace sneaking off with themselves & if the Indns had been well supplied with Ammunition they might have given a good acct. of the whole party as well as all the Indns in general on ye continent.

Captain Brant soon after having information that Brig'r St. Leger was on his march upon an Expdn agst., Fort Stanwix and soon expected at Oswego, he proceeded with his party consisting of upwards of 300 men to that place to join him where on his arrival he found Col. Claus sent from England in Spring '77 to Superind the Indians to be employed in sd Expedition. this Gentleman for upwards of twenty years acted as Assistant to the late Sr Wm Johnson in Indn Matters of which he had the care of ye Canada Indns till superseded in '75 and was well acquainted wth Mr. Brants Merit, he gave Mr. Brant and party all the Assistance in his power as to equipping them properly for the Exped wch done he [Col. Claus] declared himself a Party ready for Service the Brigadier arriving 2 days after and was for pushing on as expeditiously as possible and none of the Indians that Col. Butler was to assemble having arrived tho' living near 200 miles nearer than Mr. Brants party and Col. Claus finding they were chiefly to come the way the Expeditn was going he sent orders to the Indn Officers to halt at the Three Rivers 24 miles on his way to Fort Stanwix. Col Butler arriving the day after at Oswego was surprised that the Indns were stopt from coming there to hold a Congress and receive their presents. Col. Claus gave him to understand that Indns on a march upon the Enemy could or did not expect formal meetings and counselling besides it would be attended with several days Delay and therefore ordered Mr Butler to proceed with the few Indns he brought from Niagara and meet the Indns at the Three Rivers and equip them and proceed to Fort Stanwix with all Expeditn at the same time Col. Claus with Mr Brant and party proceeded with the Brigr leaving Mr Butler at the

Three Rivers and invested Fort Stanwix without them. 3 days after he came up with part of the Indns. when Mr Brant's sister living in the Upper Mohawk Town sent an Express to her brother with Intelligence that a body of about 900 Rebels were to be within 12 miles of Fort Stanwix that night to reinforce the Garrison, preparation then was made to oppose them. Sr. John Johnson offered his services to command a party of Light Infantry and what Indians were assembled and ready for service to reconnoitre and ambushe said party of Rebels. Accordingly when he was going to set off early in ye morning none but Mr. Brant's party were ready to join. Col. Butler and party were hesitating and deliberating whether there should not be a parley demanded of the Rebels and Letters wrote to their Leaders before the attack. Mr Brant observed that they being advancing in arms it was too late to offer any terms and that he was sure they would reject any proposals of peace and Sir John Johnson pushing off Mr. Brant followed him, the Col. and party were unprepared for the March for a considerable time after when Shame and Emulation forced them to follow. An action commenced in less than an hour's time in which Mr. Brant signalized himself highly by advancing on the Rebels Rear and harassing their Retreat and making great Slaughter chiefly with Spears and Lances. At the first onset the Senecas lost 17 men among whom were several Chiefs and Leaders wch enraged them greatly and altho' the Rebels were put to Flight and left upwards of 500 killed on the Spot yet that was not sufficient satisfaction and their principal Chief Sakoyenguaraghton a Decendant of a Brave and Loyal Family who were distinguished for their Loyalty and Attachment to the British Interest so early as the Reign of Queen Anne and were presented by ye Queen with a Coronet the only mark of distinction of that kind ever given to any of the 6 Nation Indns. This brave Seneca Chief and Mr. Brant proposed to Sr John and Col. Claus to pursue the Blow and Sr. John mentioned it to Brigr St Leger, asking for a small Body of white men to join the Indns but the Brigr gave his reasons why he could not approve of it and there the affair dropt. Not long after upon false alarms the siege was raised and the Army retreated to Oswego in order to join Gen. Burgoyne by the way of Canada. Mr Brant proposed

to Col. Claus to pass the Mohawk Villages secure their Women and Children and collect what Indns he could in his way to join Gen. Burgoyne by way of Saraghtoga wch Col. Claus agreed to. In which attempt however he ran a great Risque for one of his Compagnions Capt John of the Mohawks being a little in the rear of Mr Brant and passing Fort Stanwix was surrounded by a Rebel party and being determined not to surrender had a whole charge of Ball and Buck shot fired into his left Breast and Arm and notwithstanding made a miraculous escape but is still in danger of losing his arm. Mr. Brant at ye same time effected his scheme of putting the Mohawk families on their guard and he proceeding with what men he could collect and Gen. Burgoyne's Army but within a short distance from the Camp had an Encounter wth ye Rebel party which he soon put to flight and arrived safe wth Gen. Burgoyne who received and treated him according to his Merit the general distinguished him from the rest of the Indians but Mr Brant finding that he could be of little Service there and affairs with that Army being mismanaged he in order to guard against a Defection among the 6 Nations in case Matters should turn out unfavorable as he apprehended he returned among the 6 Nations procured encouraging Messages from the Canada Inds that remained with Gen Burgoyne and accordingly attended a general meeting of the whole confederacy at Onandago where he spared no pains to prepare and harangue them against the Shock of Gen. Burgoyne's Disaster of which they soon after had a most exaggerated acct from the Rebels the only channel they could get it then who at the same time with threats invited them to join their Cause with a large Belt of Wampun and a War Ax worked in it, however Mr. Brant counteracting and using all the most urgent Arguments such as their loss of brave Chiefs and warriors at Fort Stanwix and what Subjection and slavery they must be exposed to if the Rebels got the better as their Behavior towards them for many years past clearly pointed out. In wch he was joined by his faithful Coajutor Sakayengwaraghton the Seneca Chief above mentioned and in Reality carried his point at last so far as to make the whole Confederacy firmly resolve to act most vigorously against the Rebels; and Sayengwaraghto [*sic*] set the example by sending some of

his men that very Autumn to harass the Frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia and get Intelligence of Gen. Howe's Success abt Philadelphia wch he procured wth a great deal of art wth all its favorable Circumstances to the great Satisfaction and Encouragement of the 6 Nations. The plan of Operations for the ensuing campaign was then laid and Mr Brant determined to harass the Frontiers of the Mohawk River abt Cherry Valley [illegible] while Sakayenguaraghton took the Opportunity of this diversion to cut off the Settlement of Wayoming on the Susquehanna River. All these transactions were agreed and resolved upon while Mr. Butler was at Montreal transacting Money and Mercantile Matters and no Indn Officer of Gov't present except Mr. Brant. The Rebel Commissioners of Indn Affrs at Albany have publicly declared that if it had not been for Mr Brants Zeal and Cleverness they should surely have gained over the 6 Nations and their Allies to their Interest. After all plans being then fixed upon Mr Brant then passed thro' the Cayonga and Seneca Towns on his way to Niagara confirming the Indians in their Sentiments against the Rebels and soon after they followed him and declared their intentions to the Commanding Officer at Niagara at the same time delivering up the Rebel War Belt wch is a mark with Indians of their rejecting what was required of them by the Belt wth Contempt and Disdain. They also acquainted the Commanding Officers as the Kings Representative that they intended putting their Resolutions into Execution as early as possible in the Spring and hinted to effect it without an officer of Whites to join them. Accordingly as early as the season would admit of Mr Brant set the Example and marched off with his party to Aughwago where he had others to join him. Sakayenguaraghton assembled his men at his Town Canadasege without calling upon any white person to join them. However the Reflections of the Officers at Niagara roused Col. Butler to march to Sakayenwaraghton's Town who at the same Time reserved the Command of his men to himself. Mr Brant opened the Campaign by attacking a party of Continental Troops joined by near 300 Militia who immediately were put to flight and the Continental Troops cut to pieces all but an Officer and four privates taken prisnrs and the Country laid waste distinguishing

at the Settlement of Loyalists and not molesting a Woman or Child of the Rebels. This occasioned such an alarm that all the Inhabitants farther down the River fled towards Schenectady and the Rebels were obliged to send several Battalions to oppose Mr Brants Operations and the Harvest abt Schenectady, Cherry Valley and adjacent places being thereby neglected, prove very detrimental to the Supplies of the Rebel Army, that being the best Grain Country they depend upon and in short Mr Brant was the Dread and Terror of the whole Country.

Sakayenguaraghton at the same time put his plan in Execution making every preparation Disposition and Maneuvre with his Indns himself and when the Rebels of Wayoming came to attack him desired Col. Butler to keep his people separate from his for fear of Confusion and stood the whole Brunt of the Action himself, for there were but 2 white men killed. [illegible] And then destroyed the whole Settlement without hurting or molesting Woman or Child wch these two Chiefs to their honour be it said agreed upon before they [went into] Action in the Spring.

Thus has Mr. Brant and this faithful Indn Chief distinguished themselves most signally in the Defence of their own cause and Liberty as well as keeping sacred their Alliance entered into with the Crown of Great Britain for near a Century past: when their zealous Services at the same time have been [illegible] from the Public and the Merit given to others who had not the least pretension to it which by the bye may prove detrimental to His Majys Indian Interest and discourage and Disgust these faithful brave men as well as ye whole 6 Nation Confederacy, and those who deceived Government and the Public in such a manner can have no other view but to give Sanction to the Stigma intended to be laid to Government by its Enemies of employing Indian Officers to engage and urge Indns to commit Cruelties and Murders in the Colonies, when at the same time the Indns act in Defence of their own Cause and Liberty.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

P. S.—Soon after the Receipt of the above Anecdotes an Acct. was received from Niagara of Mr Brant having marched

a body of upwards of 400 Whites and Indns to surprise and attack two Forts at Burnetsfield alias German Flatts about the middle of Sept. last but unluckily a Rebel Scout discovered them wch alarmed the Forts and kept the Rebels and Inhabitants snug and confined within their forts and could not be tempted to come out therefore he fell to Destroying their buildings Barns Stacks of Grain &c and driving off a great number of horses and horn cattle some intended for the Rebels at Fort Stanwix which cant but cause great Alarm and [illegible] to the Rebel Army it being the only Grain Country they have to depend upon. This Ravage he carried on upon the Rebel Inhabitants only on both sides of the Mohawk Rivr for near a 20 Miles Extent.

[Endorsed]

Niagara, Sept. 1778. Anecdotes of CAPT. JOS. BRANT.

By COL. DAN'L CLAUS, Superintendent of Indian Affairs."

The student of this period will not fail to remark that the sensational narratives of the fleeing and panic-stricken borderers, given on the eve of the event, have been accepted as the undiluted truth by the majority of writers. It would be strange, indeed, if these recitals were not to a considerable degree imaginary or grossly exaggerated.

Col. Claus' apparent motive was to expose the attempt of Col. Butler,—whom he cordially disliked,—to appropriate to himself the credit of achievements justly belonging to two native chieftains, Brant and Sayenqueraghta; and, secondly, to show that the responsibility for any atrocities perpetrated at Wyoming, or on other fields, attached to the Indians alone, contending, as they were, for their own "cause and liberties" menaced by the colonists; a disingenuous proposition which, if seriously uttered at this day, would be received with a smile of derision.

NOTE.—Col. Benjamin Dorrance, before mentioned, vouchsafes us a passing glimpse of Sayenqueraghta in action. "He states that after the capitulation, the British regular troops marched into the fort by the northern or upper gateway, while Sayenqueraghta and his Indians entered at the northern portal. Col. D. recollects well the look and conduct of the Indian leader. His nostrils distended, and his burning eyes flashing like a basilisk's, as he glanced quickly to the right and to the left, with true Indian jealousy and circumspection, lest some treachery or ambuscade might await them within the fort." Stone's Wyoming, p. 214.

Col. Stone, in his *Life of Brant*, was the first prominent writer, it is believed, if indeed, he were not the last, to question the reliability of the narratives alluded to. He says (Vol. I—p. 336), "It does not appear that anything like a massacre followed the capitulation. Nor, in the events of the preceding day, is there good evidence of the perpetration of any specific acts of cruelty other than such as are usual in the general rout of a battle-field—save only the unexampled atrocities of the Tories thirsting for revenge probably in regard to other questions than that of allegiance to the King." Steuben Jenkins, a descendant of one of the patriot Heroes, in his centennial address at the Wyoming monument, July 3d, 1878, after depicting in the most lurid light the atrocities committed on that spot a hundred years before, and fiercely denouncing the perpetrators, said "Truth and justice require that another fact, which has been omitted, should be told at this time. SO FAR AS KNOWN TO THE PEOPLE HERE NOT A WOMAN OR CHILD WAS SLAIN BY THE ENEMY IN THE VALLEY.." * * *

"There was no shutting up of whole families in their houses and then fire set to them and the whole consumed together. No slaughter of whole families, men, women and children, in that or any other way."*

Butler, it is known, indignantly denied that any were slain save actual combatants with arms in their hands and in the act of using them against his forces, Lord Germain extolled the humanity displayed by the invaders.

When we take into consideration the circumstance, mentioned by Bancroft, that the Senecas had been wrought up to a pitch of frenzied exasperation by the slaughter of so many of their braves and leaders at the battle of Oriskany, and when we consider the inveterate customs and military policy of the Iroquois, their moderation at Wyoming was something remarkable.

All the wars waged between the native tribes, on this continent, involved the extirpation of one or the other of the combatants. Their warlike tactics was one of surprises, which the

* Wilkesbarre, Pa., 1878.

vast and pathless woods suggested and encouraged, and the red men ^{as a} rule possessed no defensive fortifications and none of the tremendous military enginery with which the more ingenious whites sweep off their enemies. The art of civilized warfare, which means the mangling and murdering your foes politely and humanely, in vast numbers, and at a comfortable distance, these barbaric warriors had never acquired.

The envenomed hate of their tory allies showed no relenting, but it may be said of the Senecas that the angel pity touched those wild hearts at Wyoming.

This view is not, however, the popular one. The vulgar appetite must "sup on horrors;" as though the unvarnished details of any active campaign, where men, created in the image of God, maim and butcher each other, are not sufficiently revolting.

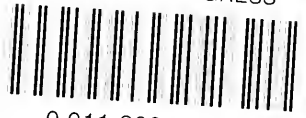
A few particulars concerning the later life of the Old King and my task is finished. When General Sullivan's army devastated the Seneca country, the King with his tribe was compelled to abandon his beloved seat on the shores of Lake Seneca and seek safety under the protecting guns of Fort Niagara. Subsequently, and at the end of the war, he retired with a portion of his people to the region drained by Buffalo creek and its tributary streams. Another portion of the nation, however, erected their bark cabins in the valley of the Genesee, their ancient abode, which in their own musical tongue they had christened The Beautiful, and there rekindled their immemorial council fire. Only for a little time were they permitted to linger there; "The foot-that-knows-no-rest" was on their track. The Old King's last abode was on the banks of the stream named in his honor, Smoke's Creek. There for a few years he dispensed a true Indian hospitality which awakens wonder even now. Among the faces lighted up by the glow of his hearth, and in strange juxtaposition with the tawny, dark-haired daughters of the wood who crouched by their side, might have been discerned the fairer and more delicate features of the captive Gilbert children, his adopted son and daughter, and the benignant countenance of the missionary Kirkland. Here within a few miles from where we sit to-night, and at about the close of the last century, the

King of the Senecas died and was buried. His grave is unmarked and the exact spot where his bones lie is unknown even to his tribe and family. His successor, the bearer of the sacred brand, was the Young King, well and favorably known to our older citizens. This chieftain was a gallant warrior; he fought on the side of the United States in the second war for independence; was seriously wounded in one of the engagements on this frontier, and received a pension from our government. Later in life he was converted to the Christian faith, which he adorned and illustrated to the day of his death, some forty-five years ago.

The Young King, so far as is known, was the last Seneca invested with the dignity and title of Sayenquerahtha. The vision of the eagle-plumed warrior flying along the forest trail, and bearing aloft the burning brand with its banner of smoke, will be seen no more. The modern Senecas have cast off their ancient form of government and fashioned another after the pattern of the race they have so much reason to fear and hate. The Long House,—as the confederated tribes figuratively styled their governmental structure,—undermined and shattered by Sullivan's army,—has since fallen and crumbled to dust. The tamed descendants of the fierce and haughty Senecas dwell mournfully on the days when their "King" held his court at Kanadesaga Castle and was the leader and pride of the triumphant Iroquois.

The name Sayenqueraghta,—literally rendered, *The-Smoke-has-disappeared*,—was prophetic of the final quenching of that council fire, which in the barbaric age, and in the early dawn of civilization on our shores, was the dread of a continent.

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